



Cryptosporidiosis (*Cryptosporidium parvum*)

What is cryptosporidiosis disease?

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease caused by a one-celled parasite, *Cryptosporidium parvum*. The disease causes diarrhea, which is often associated with abdominal pain, and may be profuse and watery. Vomiting is common in children.

Who is at risk for cryptosporidiosis?

People of all ages are at risk, but it is especially common in day-care settings.

What are the symptoms of cryptosporidiosis?

Although people infected with cryptosporidiosis sometimes do not get sick, when they do, they can have watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, an upset stomach or a slight fever. In some cases, people infected with cryptosporidiosis can have severe diarrhea and lose weight..

How soon do symptoms appear?

The first symptoms of cryptosporidiosis may appear two to 10 days after a person becomes infected

How is cryptosporidiosis spread?

You can get cryptosporidiosis by putting anything in your mouth that has touched the feces of a person or animal that is infected. Drinking contaminated water or eating contaminated food also can give you cryptosporidiosis.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

As long as diarrhea is present, the person is able to spread the disease.

How is a person diagnosed?

Laboratory tests are available to obtain a positive diagnosis.

What is the treatment?

Healthy people who contract cryptosporidiosis almost always get better without any specific treatment. Symptoms can come and go for up to 30 days, but usually subside in less. However, cryptosporidiosis can cause severe illness in people with compromised immune systems, such as those with HIV infection or those taking drugs that suppress the immune system.

Does past infection make a person immune?

No.

Should children or others be excluded from day care, school, work or other activities if they have cryptosporidiosis?

- Exclude any child or adult with diarrhea from school or day care until the diarrhea has ceased. Children who are infected with cryptosporidium but do not have diarrhea may be allowed to return.
- Remove infected people from jobs that require handling food until they no longer have symptoms.

What can be done to prevent the spread of cryptosporidiosis disease?

- Frequently wash your hands, especially after toilet visits and changing diapers.
- Follow proper food handling and preparation techniques, such as washing hands with soap after handling raw foods of animal origin and after toilet use or diaper changing.
- Wash hands carefully after handling farm animals or pets.
- Be careful when swimming in lakes, rivers or pools and when using hot tub. Avoid swallowing the water.
- Drink safe water. Boil drinking water for one minute if you are unsure of source.

Additional Information:

For additional information, call the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

This disease is a reportable condition. As mandated by North Dakota law, any incidence of this disease shall be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.

Resources: American Academy of Pediatrics. [chapter title]. In: Pickering LK, ed. Red Book: 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. 26th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2003:[123-127]. Control of Communicable Disease Manual, 18th Edition-2004, Heymann, David, MD ed.

